

Memorandum

From: Noel Ludwig, R2 Mountain Resorts Team Hydrologist
To: Kara Chadwick, San Juan National Forest Supervisor
Subject: Snowy Range Improvements EA: Wild and Scenic Rivers and Roadless Areas
Date: June 10, 2020

The primary impacts potentially affecting wild and scenic rivers (WSRs) and roadless areas that would result from the Snowy Range Ski Area (SRSA) Upgrades and Maintenance Project are related to construction and operation of proposed infrastructure. WSR and roadless area impacts related to the project are expected to be negligible, so these resources have been dismissed from detailed analysis in the Environmental Assessment (EA). Additional detail is provided below.

Resource locations and designations

There are one designated WSR and five WSR-eligible rivers within 50 miles of the project area; these are summarized below in Table 1.

Table 1. Wild and scenic rivers (WSRs) and WSR-eligible rivers within 50 miles of the proposed action project area.

Name	Designation	Distance from project area at nearest point	Direction from project area	State
Cache la Poudre	WSR	48.7 miles	SE	CO
N. Platte River (Med Bow)	WSR Eligible	19.1 miles	SW	WY & CO
Encampment River	WSR Eligible	34.6 miles	SW	WY & CO
Elk river	WSR Eligible	42.6 miles	SW	CO
N. Fork Cache la Poudre	WSR Eligible	43.2 miles	SE	CO
Roaring Fork/Red Canyon	WSR Eligible	48.0 miles	SW	CO

There are also seven designated roadless areas within 10 miles of the project area; these are listed in Table 2.

Table 2. Designated roadless areas within 50 miles of the proposed action project area.

Name	Distance from project area at nearest point	Direction from project area
Snowy Range	0.5 miles	NW
Libby Flats	0.6 miles	W and S
Middle Fork	1.9 miles	S

French Creek	5.3 miles	WSW
Sheep Mountain	6.6 miles	SE
Rock Canyon	6.8 miles	N
Campbell Lake	8.4 miles	WNW

Impacts from construction

The proposed project would have no direct impact on these resources, and the only source of indirect impacts would be from vehicle emissions which could potentially impact visibility. As noted in the Technical Memorandum on Air Quality, Climate Change, and Wilderness, air quality—and thus visibility—may be degraded temporarily from vehicle emissions during project construction. These impacts are anticipated to be small, localized, and short-term. Construction equipment, including trucks and staff vehicles, would be the primary sources of these emissions. Construction may last one to two summers.

Because the prevailing wind direction across the Medicine Bow National Forest is predominantly from the west, it is unlikely that any emissions generated directly or indirectly by SRSA's operations currently affect any WSRs or WSR-eligible rivers. The emissions from construction activities would be limited to a couple of seasons and small enough that they would be very unlikely to result in any reduction to visibility within these WSRs within 50 miles, none of which lie to the east of the project area. Overall, visibility reduction associated with the construction phase of the project would be negligible and difficult to measure.

Because no construction or other activities are proposed within designated roadless areas—all of which lie outside of the SRSA special use permit (SUP) area—there would be no impacts on roadless areas that could alter their designation or function.

Impacts from operation

There would be no direct operational impacts from the proposed projects on any WSRs, WSR-eligible rivers, or designated roadless areas, all of which lie outside of the SRSA SUP area. Potential indirect impacts would be limited to possible reductions in visibility, although emissions associated with the operation of proposed infrastructure would be very small. The primary source of these operational emissions would be expanded operation of the existing snowmaking pump (capable of pumping 400 gallons per minute). Occasional vehicle use, for example during the summer for maintenance activities, would also contribute minor incremental emissions. Again, these would have no measurable impact on visibility along any WSRs within 50 miles of SRSA.

Impacts associated with estimated visitation growth

The proposed action is not anticipated to measurably increase visitation at SRSA. While this increase would result in slightly more transit to/from the ski area, this growth would not generate any vehicle activity or construction within designated roadless areas, nor would it be sufficient to cause a measurable reduction in visibility at any WSRs or WSR-eligible rivers within 50 miles. Impacts from visitation growth on roadless areas or WSRs would be essentially nonexistent, since

winter access to—and activity in—these areas is limited and the closest WSR or WSR-eligible area is nearly 20 miles from the project area.